

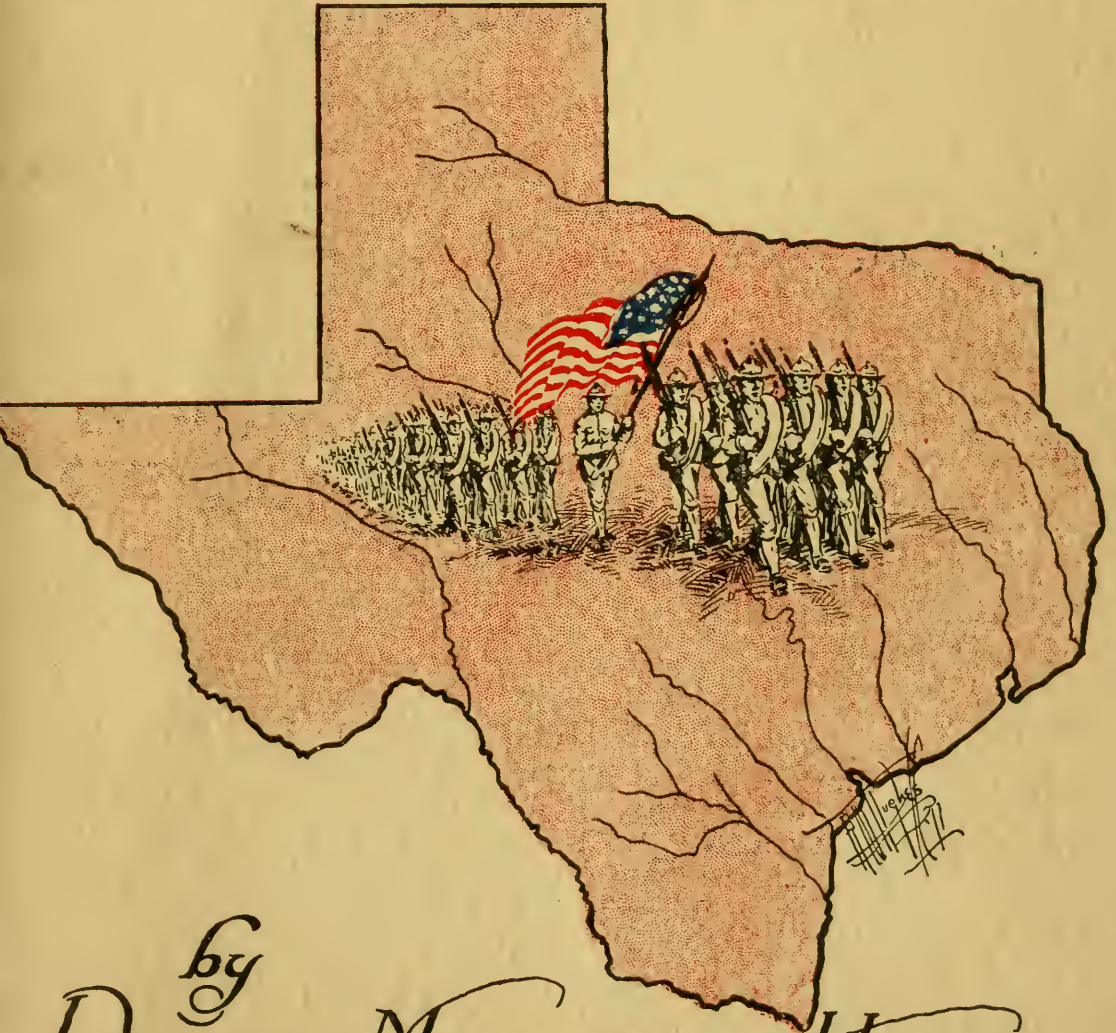
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Marching to France and Other Texas Rhymes



by
RUSSELL MERIWETHER HUGHES

Marching to France

and Other Texas Rhymes



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Marching to France and Other Texas Rhymes

By

RUSSELL MERIWETHER HUGHES

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TO MY SISTER
Miss Lillian R. Hughes

Marching to France

Marching, Marching,
And never a knight on Holy Crusade
Went forth with prouder or readier blade,
Than the men that march in the crimson shade
Of the stars and bars,
To France.

Marching, Marching,
Without the bugle, clear and loud,
Without the cheer of the surging crowd,
He is slipping away perhaps to his shroud,
“Under sealed orders”,
To France.

Marching, Marching,
Bristling with guns is the armoured car,
And the aeroplane's motor is heard afar,
And the long, dark transport slips o'er the bar
Without a good-bye,
To France.

Marching, Marching,
And the rythmical echo of their feet
Is heard in the Nation's quick heart-beat,
As their olive-drab uniforms fill the street,
On their ominous journey,
To France.

Marching, Marching,
With a song on his lips and a laugh in his eye,
Though brooding deaths in the ocean lie,
He is ready and willing to go and die
For the stars and stripes,
In France.

Marching, Marching,
The silence echoes the March of the Dead,
And the sun and the moon burn a sullen red
And his heart beats high like the flag o'erhead
That he'll carry in triumph
Through France.

The Echo

Waiting—Waiting.

The moon in the east reflects the red
Of battlefields where heroes bled.

And the old, old cry of the soul, “Is he dead?
Is he hurt and alone
In France?”

Waiting—Waiting.

She wonders if that was their last good-bye,
And there are no tears, but a shuddering cry,
“Dear God, You cannot let him die,
Where my heart lies bleeding
In France.”

Waiting—Waiting.

O God, is not ours the harder task
To hide our thoughts 'neath a smiling mask?
Had we our choice, we'd only ask
To be marching—with him—
In France.

To Lillian

A wealth of shining hair that falls
In softened waves of gold.
Bright eyes of blue that pearly
tears
Or ready laughter hold.

A silver thread of melody
From the violin's pent-up soul;
A brilliant blaze of technique
Where a million victories roll.

A whirling figure in yellow and red
With a tinkling tambourine;
A shining vision of satin and tulle
In a beautiful ball-room scene.

The ready hand of a real, true friend,
Unselfish and loving and sweet.
May Fortune open her golden doors
And pour her wealth at your feet.

The Song of Bacchus

O, the grass is green and the sky is blue,
And the laughing field-flowers sparkle with dew.
Hear the answering cry of the cooing dove,
 “To live, to live, to love.”

The clear brook's yodel the echo wakes,
Where the weeping willow her banner shakes,
And the swallow, winging his flight above
 Cries, “Live, to live, to love.”

A green snake glides in the oak-tree's root,
And a tawny tiger purrs at my foot.
What's the breeze a-murmuring of?
 “Love, to live, to love.”

The lithe, white nymphs are dancing along
Laughing, and playing and singing a song
Of an Oread, who in her mountain cove
 Sings, “Love, O Love, O love.”

O, the sun and the sky and the wind and the sea
And the dryads singing so merrily.
The purple grapes their nectar give.
 Ah, life, to live, to live.

There Ain't No 'countin' Fer Sum Things

“There ain't no 'countin' fer sum things,”
Thus speaks Silver Cy,
And we know there's a story coming,
By the twinkle in his eye.

Cy is a broncho buster,
An awful likeable chap
In spite of his tall ungainliness
And the way his eyebrows lap.

“I wuz out on th' Bar L outfit,
Down in th' Lone Star State
Jus' this side of th' Rio Grande,
'Twas there that I met Kate.

“Purtiest l'il critter.
Shy as a unbroke colt,
As bad as a 'lectric batt'ry
Thet yu jes' can't tak' a-holt.

“Fust time I ever seen her
She wuz on her wild cayuse
A runnin' down a cayote
An' yellin' like hell broke loose.

“She would write an’ say tu meet her
At th’ old oak tree at eight,
An’ I would get there early,
An’ she’d get there late.

“We’d give him that ole Western
trick
Of the desperate robber man.
So, that evenin’ I started out
To th’ ’pointed bit o’ lan’.

“Eight an’ nine they came an’ went.
My Ingersoll ticked ten,
I dozed a little sittin’
On my sleepy bronc, an’ then,

“I started fer th’ ranch house
With many a peevish curse
An’ found th’ Bar L outfit
As solemn as a herse.

“Nex’ day I got a telegram,
It said, ‘PLEASE pardon me
Fer runnin’ off with Harry.
We’re as happy as can be.

“ ‘We can keep a lovely li’l home
On what his salary brings.’
No sir,” said Cy, “There certainly
ain’t
No ’countin’ fer sum things.”

Content

The soft Spring sunshine
Dances and plays
On the grass

Under the spreading
Trees while the
Breezes pass.

And the quivering shadows
Dodge the
Gay sunbeams

And a lazy cricket
Suns himself
And dreams.

The cool, near sky
Holds one
White cloud

Where a frail sky-fairy
Sits in a
Misty shroud.

Discontent

The sun is white
 And the cricket's cry
Is monotonous as
 The eternal sigh
Of the sea. The broad
 Blue heaven's face
Is naught but a glaring
 Unbroken space.
The breeze is as dead
 As the dull, hot day.
Ah! Would that I might be
 Up and away!

Are You Coming?

Are you coming? Are you coming?
There is work for those who dare,
There's a place for every true man
In the conflict over there.
There's a nation's load to lighten
And a country's wrongs to right.
There's a blow to strike for freedom,
'Tis for liberty they fight.

Are you coming? Are you coming?
It's the battle of the world,
And through the smoke, all-glorious
The stars and stripes unfurled.
Are you playing in that great game
With humanity at steak?
To lose must mean the tide
Of Christianity must break.

Are you coming? Are you coming?
There is tumult in the air,
All the Nation is responding
To the martial bugle's blare.
Are you fighting for your loved ones?
For you mother and your wife?
There are many gallant soldiers
Dying in that world-wide strife.

Are you coming? Are you coming?
They are fighting over there.
Are you coming? Are you coming?
There is work for those who dare.

Uncle Rastus on the Weather

How do, starngah. Whar you frum?
Mississip'? Dat's far tu cum.
"Weather fine"? Jehosaphat!
Whut a fool remark is dat!

Nigger, it ain't rained roun' here
For, I reckon, mos' a year.
Cotton's dried up. Craps is dead.
Steers is done got tu be fed.

"Purty sunshine"? Well, I guess!
Tho' we'd like a cloud th' bes'.
But if th' good Lord needs th' rain
Somewheres else, we can't complain

Look dar, nigger! Does yu see?
Whar's mah specs? O, Lordy me!
Whar is dis nigger's weakenin'
brain?
I'se right, chile! Thank Gawd!
It's rain!

Lolita

Down on the streets of old Seville
When the moon in mid-heaven is set
You can hear gay laughter and soft guitar,
And the click of the castanet.

In a brilliantly-lighted Spanish cafe
Thru air heavy with cigarette smoke,
Gleams the glitter of jewels and shoulders bare,
Fringed scarfs and toreador's cloak.

The jests are many, the laugh is light,
In this garden of yellow and red,
And burning black eyes and crimson lips
Are tost in the glasses o'erhead.

When the gaiety's highest and wine flows free,
With the music a-crash and a-swirl
In the midst of the tables of revelry
Walks Lolita, the dancing girl.

With many a cheer she is welcomed in
As with swaggering, easy grace
She, with a half-smoked cigarette
In her fingers, takes her place.

A little black hat, a-bob with balls
Is set on her blue-black head.
Her mantilla's draped o'er a yellow skirt
And she carries a cape of red.

Down on the floor she flings her hat
And swirling her crimson cape
She advances, retreats, with agile step,
Like the matador's daring escape.

A blue-eyed youth in a broadcloth suit
With a twirky foreign mustache—
A black-eyed man with an olive skin
And a picador hat and sash.

A jeweled maiden who waves her fan
'Neath her soft, deep, langorous glance.
A fat, sleek matron; a gray-haired earl—
All breathless, watch her dance.

Her eyes dart a challenge, 'tween her teeth is a rose
And her soft, lithe body swings free,
And with easy curve of her round, white arms,
Play her castanets rythmically.

The music grows wilder, the dancer's afire,
There is passionate joy in her face.
Those watching arise, toss their hats, cry,
"To Spain!"
And cheer the dark dancer's wild grace.

Down the gray streets of old Seville
At the birth of the quivering day
The spirit of Spain dances and sings
In a noisy Spanish cafe.

The Slacker

When the clarion cry of your country's call
Is sweeping from shore to shore,
Will you be one to stand aside
While the enemy screams at the door?

Will you be one, when the shrapnel song
Of death is heard afar,
To say, "I will not fight, for this
Is naught but a money war"?

Will you hide behind a woman's skirt?
Cries your mother, "In sixty-one
My father died for his flag. Have I
A coward bred in my son"?

Will you force Uncle Sam to force you to fight
'Gainst your enemy's armed host?
He has given you all you have in life.
Will you come when he needs you most?

Will you say, "I will wait. There is time, there
is time."
When in France your countrymen fight
'Gainst the Teuton there for the stars and bars
And glorious freedom's right?

Ah, better a grave on a foreign shore
Alone 'neath the red white and blue,
Than a living death where the people hiss
"He was a slacker."
Are you?

The Wind

The wind! The wind! Away it flies,
Rolling the clouds across the skies;
Whipping the branches from off each tree,
Howling the while in fendish glee;
Creeping thru' cracks with the softest sighs,
Beating the wings of each bird that flies;
Snatching the flowers from off their bush,
And sinking again in a deathlike hush,
Catching the leaves and bearing them high
With a laugh and a sob like a wild-cat's cry,
Flinging the dust up everywhere
In miniature cyclones here and there;
Over the cities and over the trees,
Over the mountains and over the seas,
Asking from no man the way to go,
Only God knows where the wind will blow.

Spring Fever

Th' birds a-lovin' in th' trees,
Th' clouds at rest on th' soft, warm breeze,
An' a lazy smile on th' earth. I sees
 It's got Spring Fever.

Th' dancin', dimplin', happy brook
Is still a-gurglin', but with th' look
Of a fat, pink baby when it's took
 Spring Fever.

I hear th' ole grasshopper's cry
An' acrost th' deep, th' deep blue sky
Flits a yaller butterfly,
 With Spring Fever.

A-listenin' to th' wind go pas'.
An' in th' wavin' Johnson grass,
Th' noisy crickets fuss an' sass,
 'Bout Spring Fever.

Th' new-turned earth has a fresh, sweet smell
An' muffled by distance, th' old cow-bell
Carries a message it wants to tell,
 Of Spring Fever.

Of course th' sun is powerful hot.
Tho' I ain't plowed an awful lot
I'm tired an' sleepy. Guess I've got
 Spring Fever.

You

There's a laugh on my lips and a song in my heart,
And the sea and the sky are blue.
What has made the world such a joyous place?
Is it you, my dear, is it you?

There is music in every sigh of the breeze ;
There are colors untold in the dew.
What has given the light and song to the world?
Is it you, sweetheart, is it you?

I can feel the joy in the heart of the earth,
And its joy is in mine, too.
Ah, now I know who put it there,
It was you, my love, it was you!

A Color Harmony

The death of Autumn! The radiant sun
Looks down on quivering trees, gray-brown
and clad
In the last rags of Summer's raiment glad,
And even these are falling, one by one.

The grass a crackling yellow carpet seems
From which the red ghosts of the weeds arise.
The butterfly slips to the earth and dies;
And the dead leaves sigh like ghosts of blasted
dreams.

High overhead the arch of pale blue skies.
Is there no color in this sweep of gray
To make eternal Nature harmony?
Lo! Thru' the trees a scarlet Cardinal flies.

O, the prairies 'neath the sunset
In the west the sky is gold,
And the rolling plains are rising
To that red disk, fold on fold.
All are clad in blue and purple,
And their gorgeous colors play
O'er the throbbing earth in worship
At the vespers of the day.

O, the prairies in the starlight,
A coyote's wail afar,
And across the brilliant heavens
Flys a burning shooting star.
And the road is a soft gray ribbon,
And the wind has a weeping moan,
And up on the hill a clearing,
And the twinkling lights of home.

The Last Question

Do you ever think, when the wind is high
And the shadowy clouds hang low in the sky,
When the far-off moan of some waterfall
Answers the shriek of a banshee's call—

Do you think, as you face the setting sun,
That your race of life is nearly run?
Do you ask yourself, as your life you scan,
“What have I done for my fellow-man?”

“Has the work God gave me to do been done?
The battle of life's been fought. Have I won?
Of the perfect whole I'm an imperfect part.
Have I helped or hindered the world's wide mart?”

Can you say, on that night when the wind is high,
And a shadowy angel comes down from the sky,
Can you say, head high, “I have done my all.”
When you give your account at your Maker's call?

Priscilla, a Portrait

(To K. H.)

She is dainty and she's pretty,
She's demure and yet she's witty,
She is like a bunch of old primroses sweet.
With her bonnet, all of lace,
Like a frame about her face,
To her tiny silk-encased and cross-patched feet
With pink ribbons all a-loop
About her airy hoop,
And her creamy shoulders rising from her shawl.
With her mitts disclosing fingers,
Where the breath of lilac lingers,
She is ready for the Southern Guv'nor's ball.

Texas

I'm going back to Texas
Where the sky and prairie meet,
And the fertile land is measured off
By miles, and not by feet.
Where the mocking-birds and sparrows
Sing a merry roundelay,
And many a herd of cattle roam
The plains both night and day.

I'm going back to Texas,
Where the sweet bluebonnets grow,
And breezes fan us always
From the Gulf of Mexico.
Where the sun, it sets in glory,
And the creeping, purple night
Comes and stays 'till morn dispels it
With a blazing sword of light.

I'm going back to Texas
Where the nimble horned toad
Runs races with the rattler
Past the prairie-dog's abode.
Where the courtesy of Dixie
Blends with brav'ry of the West.
'Mong the states of our great country
Old Texas is the best!

The Ghosts of the Pawnshop

Down on a busy thoroughfare where the ceaseless crowds go by
In the heart of the city that voices the woes of the people with
its sigh,

The pawnshop calls one's gaze away from the stately
buildings tall,

Away from their swaying heights to its own queer windows
small.

Over its creaking doors are hung three battered rusty balls,
And only the "last-chance-down-and-out" at its dusty counter
calls.

And the little old man that sits and looks at the city's changing
mass

Is alone. But no! For he hears the swish as the ghosts of the
pawnshop pass.

Out of the pledges of long ago those ghosts of memory troop
And with many a sob and many a tear they stand in a whisper-
ing group.

And a story each pale ghost can tell of poverty, death or crime,
Of the rich and the poor, the happy and sad of every country
and clime.

From a dusty Stradavarius steps a bent old man whose eyes
Still cherish the light of a blasted dream where the soul of
music lies,

And there from a golden locket where a starving baby creeps,
A fair young mother by a clock kneels over her child and weeps.
From a handsome watch and a diamond ring with the proof of
what was lost;

On the ticker ribbon still in his hands glides a man who was
"double-crossed."

Down from the wall where two rapiers in their tarnished
splendor hang,
Springs a cavalier whose heart is light as the gay bright songs
he sang;
He kisses the hand of the jeweled dame who trips from an
ivory fan;
And there creeps from a pistol the hideous soul of a hell-bent
murdered man.
Out of a strange old wedding ring slips the ghost of a woman
fair,
With a cold, bright steel in her soft white breast and the blood
on her golden hair.

They whisper together in the gloom, these ghosts of the shop
hard by,
And they echo with voices full of pain the city's eternal sigh
For they know, these spirits of pledges grim, the tragedies of
life;
They know that for some 'tis a down hill coast and for others
an endless strife.
Tho, only the "last-chance down-and-out" at its dusty counter
calls,
It is rich in memories, this little shop with its battered, rusty
balls.

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